

PRAYER ALERT...

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BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

■ **FRIDAY FOCUS: 8 May 2009 - Hope for our relationships - 2 Chronicles 20:15**

Relationships are not always easy but God is always there to help us stand in the battle and find a way through

Pray: For couples having difficulties in their relationship that they will turn to the Lord for wisdom and breakthrough in their circumstances. For someone you know who is struggling in their friendships/family relationships.

More: http://worldprayer.org.uk/uploads/Friday_Focus_May_2009.doc

■ **Global Day of Prayer UK: 31 May 2009**

No of countries registered to date: 213 No of UK events registered to date: 36 - up on this time last year.

Since the Global day of Prayer began in 2005, Christians across the British Isles have taken part in both large and small events across our nations. In 2008 in the British Isles, we know of around 60 events that took place in Cathedrals, churches, open air parks, on hills, up cranes, at city gates, in smaller football stadiums, at Millwall stadium in London and many more venues. Across the world, 214 nations linked in with the vision in 2008 and we are praying for all 220 nations to be represented in 2009. In this time of global shaking, it is important for God's people around the world to call on the name of the Lord as outlined in 2 Chronicles 7:14 which is a foundation scripture in the GDOP movement. Join in with the fourth Global Day of Prayer on Pentecost Sunday – 31st May 2009 click 'More'.

Pray: for all those who have not committed that they would be inspired to participate. (2Ch.7:14)

More: <http://worldprayer.org.uk/gdop---welcome/>

■ **Joanna Lumley 'trusts' Brown on Gurkhas**

The prime minister suffered a shock Commons defeat on the issue last week, forcing ministers to reconsider existing rules on how many Gurkhas can settle in the UK. Some 36,000 Gurkhas, a brigade of Nepalese soldiers who serve in the British Army, were denied UK residency because they left before 1997. Joanna Lumley has said she trusts Gordon Brown to do the 'right thing' for the Gurkhas after meeting with the prime minister to discuss the issue. Ms Lumley said Mr Brown had taken the matter 'into his own hands' and would come up with a 'solution' to the issue of residency rights by the end of May. The actress has long campaigned for all Gurkhas and their families to be given the right to settle in the UK. No 10 said the prime minister was considering Ms Lumley's arguments. The Lib Dems said the government must 'act quickly' to give the Gurkhas what they wanted, saying the UK had a 'simple moral obligation' towards them. (See Prayer Alert 0209)

LATEST: Yesterday Joanna Lumley says the immigration minister has 'reassured' her over Gurkhas' rights to settle in the UK, in an unscheduled and dramatic meeting. The actress and Phil Woolas came face-to-face in highly-charged scenes at the BBC's Westminster office and then held an impromptu press conference nearby. It followed the rejection of appeals by

five Gurkhas for residency, rulings which Ms Lumley said were 'shocking'. Opposition parties said government policy had become a 'shambles'. Although the meeting had not resulted in a change of policy, it showed just how powerful the Gurkha campaign had become and how crucial Ms Lumley's involvement was. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8037181.stm

Pray: that Mr Brown will remember the moral obligation to our Gurkha veterans and amend the recent decisions. (Ro.8:12-13)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8036036.stm

■ 'God's waiting room' hosts an audience with Dr Death

An Australian euthanasia activist staged the first of a series of 'suicide workshops' in Britain yesterday, in a town affectionately termed 'God's waiting room' due to its elderly population. Almost 100 people attended the event, held at a hotel in Bournemouth, to listen to Dr Philip Nitschke lay out the options for people wishing to kill themselves. The doctor promoted his DIY suicide kit, which included an 'exit bag' to use as a suffocation device and a selection of powerful drugs from Mexico. The vast majority of his audience were of retirement age, many of them married couples. During his presentation, Dr Nitschke detailed various legal loopholes which could allow medical professionals to legally assist suicide. The Australian doctor flew into the UK on Saturday, but was detained at Heathrow airport for nine hours before he was eventually issued with a one-week visa. Assisted suicide is currently illegal in the UK and carries a maximum sentence of 14 years in jail.

Pray: that the work of Dr Nitschke will be frustrated and those who have received or seek his teaching would be given God's wisdom and spiritual insight. (1Cor.2:13)

More: <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-wellbeing/health-news/gods-waiting-room-hosts-an-audience-with-dr-death-1679721.html>

■ Paintings of churches not allowed at London hospital

A council in London has received complaints after artists were encouraged to contribute paintings for a local hospital but were disallowed from submitting paintings of churches. The invitation was made by Queen's Hospital in Romford via an email sent out by Havering Council. Local artists were invited to submit paintings as a way of improving the atmosphere at the hospital but were told not to submit paintings of churches in order to be 'mindful' of other religions. Despite the ban on paintings of churches, buildings for other religious faiths were still allowed. One local artist, Roy Storey, said that he called the council to complain about the restrictions and was told that it was the decision of the matron not to include pictures of churches. One local painter was quoted by the Daily Mail as saying, 'There are so many religious beliefs, why would they pick on churches? What about synagogues? A painting is a good picture because it is a good composition, not because of the religion.'

Pray: against these ongoing politically correct attacks against Christianity in our nation. (Na.2:1)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/paintings.of.churches.not.allowed.at.london.hospital/23265.htm>

■ Church of Scotland clergy oppose homosexual appointment

A fifth of all Church of Scotland clergy have signed an online petition against the appointment of an openly gay minister, BBC Scotland can reveal. Concern has been raised within the Kirk that failure to overturn the appointment could provoke a mass walkout by many members. The petition relates to Reverend Scott Rennie, the minister at Queen's Cross Church in Aberdeen. The online petition states: 'We urgently alert all commissioners to the 2009 General Assembly to the extreme gravity of the situation.' Mr Rennie's parish have said they are happy with their new minister and believe that the national Kirk should be a broad church, encompassing a wide range of beliefs and lifestyles. The Church of Scotland considered the viability of gay relationships two years ago, and decided on a period of reflection. The Church's General Assembly will rule on the case later this month.

Pray: for the General Assembly as they pray and reflect on this issue prior to their ruling. (Heb.13:7)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/north_east/8032852.stm

■ Female binge drink rates 'double'

The percentage of women who binge drink has doubled since the 1990s, research has found. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation study found 15% of women now binged on alcohol each week. In men, the figure stood at 23% - a small rise on previous statistics. During the last 20 years, there has been a general increase in drinking in nearly all age groups in the UK. Campaigners said the findings showed drinking was a problem across society. But it is the binge drinking figures which were perhaps the most surprising. For women, the rate had risen from 7% to 15% during the period, with rises seen for each age group. 'The government urgently needs to broaden its focus to reduce harms from alcohol across the whole population.' But a Department of Health spokesman said that tackling high levels of drinking was a priority.

Pray: for those who resort to binge drinking as their 'escape' or as part of a 'social scene'. (Pr.20:1)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8034533.stm>

EUROPE

■ France: Probe into African leaders

A French magistrate has opened a preliminary investigation into alleged embezzlement by three African leaders. Presidents Omar Bongo of Gabon, Denis Sassou-Nguesso of Republic of Congo and Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea

deny any wrongdoing. The investigation follows lawsuits by the French branch of an anti-corruption group, Transparency International. It has accused the three leaders of buying luxury homes and cars in France with money from African public funds. William Bourdon, a lawyer representing the plaintiffs, told Reuters news agency: 'This is an unprecedented decision because it's the first time a judicial inquiry has been opened concerning suspected embezzlement by sitting presidents.' Correspondents say the case could strain French relations with the three oil-producing countries. Gabon and Republic of Congo are former French colonies, while Equatorial Guinea is a growing oil exporter. A 2007 French police investigation found the leaders of the three countries and their relatives owned homes in upmarket areas of Paris and on the Riviera along with luxury cars, including Bugattis, Ferraris and Maseratis.

Pray: that this investigation will expose the greed and corruption that is rife in many national leaders. (Lk.12:15)

More: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8035218.stm>

WORLDWIDE

■ South Africa: Bishop urges president-elect Zuma to 'eradicate poverty'

Archbishop Buti Tlhagale' president of the Southern Africa Catholic Bishops' Conference has called on the newly-elected African National Congress government, led by Jacob Zuma, to go all out in its efforts to eradicate poverty, HIV and AIDS. 'We would like to be your partners in the effort to eradicate poverty. We are weary of fighting government for what it is constitutionally, legally and morally bound to deliver. The ANC failed to garner a two-thirds majority in the 22 April elections, a result it needed in order to change the constitution, but it still romped to victory with 65.9 percent of the nearly 18 million votes cast. The election for the president will take place in the South African parliament on 9 May. Archbishop Tlhagale, who also heads the diocese of Johannesburg, called on the government to focus its attention on the weakest – the old who are not appreciated, the electronically excluded, the sick who don't have the strength, the hurt, the victims, the illegal immigrants, the single parents, the orphans and the vulnerable. (See Prayer Alert 1709)

Pray: for the election to be fair and for the weakest in the community to be considered. (Ps.12:5)

More: <http://www.eni.ch/featured/article.php?id=2961>

■ Zimbabwe: Human rights and political activists detained

Eighteen human rights and political activists, including the Director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, were detained two months after they were released on bail, after being tortured in prison. Amnesty International considers all the detainees, accused of trying to topple the previous government, to be 'potential prisoners of conscience' and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release or a prompt and fair trial. 'The trial of these human rights activists has all the hallmarks of a political trial,' said Veronique Aubert, Deputy Director of Amnesty's Africa Programme. 'The charges appear to be similar to the charges used during the 2002 treason trial of Morgan Tsvangirai, now prime minister.'

Pray: for all political detainees in Zimbabwe to be released. (Ps.7:6)

More: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/9396>

■ China: Christians in Henan province detained

A group of Chinese house church Christians, including key leaders, remain detained in China's Henan province after security forces raided a house church in Xinye city. U.S.-based China Aid Association, a well-informed advocacy organization, said 18 Christians were arrested in the April 30 raid and 16 of them are still behind bars, including leaders of the house church group China Gospel Fellowship. Among the detained Christians were also 10 preachers from Henan province. The detained Christians gathered for a special 'communion service at a house church in Xinye city' in Henan province when 'a dozen' officers of the Public Security Bureau, China's main law enforcement agency, interrupted the worship service. 'Eighteen Christians were taken to the PSB office of Xinye city. They were each forced to pay a 1000 yuan (about \$150) fine, before being sent to prison. The Communist government denied religious rights abuses and says Christians are free to worship in the state-run churches.

Pray: for God to use this persecution to spread the Gospel more powerfully in China. (Ac.4:24-26)

More: <http://www.bosnewslife.com/7270-breaking-news-china-detains-16-christians-in-henan-province>

■ North Korea: Refugees tell of strong but persecuted Church

The fear of punishment that authorities have instilled in North Korean Christians keeps most of them from publicly revealing their faith. As many as 400,000 Christians are estimated to worship secretly in the country, whilst more than 200,000 North Koreans (of which at least 40,000 are believed to be Christian) are estimated to be held in political prison camps for various perceived 'disloyalties' to the regime, including adherence to Christianity. North Korea is informing its people that the world hates North Korea and that the world is about to attack North Korea. Whilst of course not true the use of that kind of rhetoric internally, when there's no other source of information, creates a sort of wartime mentality that North Korean leaders use most effectively to control and constrain their population. Rations have also been cut back creating further instability. Underground Christians in the country use all this as motivation for evangelism.

Pray: for God to inspire the North Korean Christians in many new ways to evade capture and release the Gospel amongst their neighbours. (Ps.49:3)

More: http://ausprayernet.org.au/newsletter/DisplayNewsletter.php?e_id=0000001722#st3

■ Pakistan: Army pounds Taleban positions

Pakistani helicopter gunships and warplanes have been bombing suspected Taleban militants in the Swat Valley as clashes intensify in the north-west. Thousands of civilians continue to flee the area, with fighting especially heavy in the town of

Mingora since peace deal has now broken down. Fighting has not only erupted in several areas around Mingora, but there are also reports of more clashes in the neighbouring area of Buner. The International Committee of the Red Cross has meanwhile warned that a humanitarian crisis is intensifying in north-west Pakistan. In a statement the ICRC said that it no longer had access to the areas most affected by the conflict and that precise statistics of the displaced were difficult to ascertain. 'The ICRC and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society are currently marshalling their resources to be able to provide for 120,000 internally displaced people, affected by the fighting, with food and essential relief items.'

Pray: for all curfews to be lifted and for civilians to be free to leave the area, pray also for God's spirit to lead the refugees to make wise choices in who they wish to govern them. (Pr.4:7)

More: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8037281.stm

■ Pakistan: Christian threatened with death by lawyer

Hector Aleem, 51, was denied bail for his own safety after he was charged with abetting blasphemy against Islam. Tariq Dhamal, an attorney for the unnamed complainant said, 'If the judge does not punish Aleem according to the law, then we will kill him ourselves.' Police arrested Aleem last November when a Muslim scholar received a text message insulting the Islamic prophet Muhammad. Authorities charged Aleem with blasphemy and abetting blasphemy, sections 295(c) and 109(bb) respectively of the Pakistani criminal code. Court evidence shows the text message came from an unlisted phone number, not Aleem's. At an April 25 hearing, Investigating Officer Zafer Iqbal said he had concluded that evidence proved Aleem's innocence. Iqbal's investigation, along with a February judicial decision, resulted in charges of blaspheming Islam being dropped. The charge of abetting blasphemy still stands.

Pray: for Hector's immediate release and for God to give much wisdom to all in Pakistan wishing to see Christ proclaimed safely. (Lk.21:15)

More: <http://www.compassdirect.org/en/display.php?page=lead&lang=en&length=long&id=element=&backpage=&critere=&countryname=&rowcur=>

PRAISE REPORTS

■ UK's Baptists told to expect revival

Reflecting on the place of the church in today's society, Rev Kingsley President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, said, 'Unfortunately today in our own nation, the Church has almost been taken captive. - Anything today that is distinctly Christian is now regarded as offensive to non-Christians and therefore must be removed. - Coupled with the economic [crisis] and surging crime rate, we are willing to turn to anything but God to solve our problems.' He went on to say UK's Baptists should become 'an expectant community. God is a faithful God, this is the dawning of a new era, and as we put our hands together and believe God, HE WILL VISIT HIS PEOPLE AFRESH, will forgive his people and heal our land. Quoting William Cary he continued, 'There will be a revival and a fresh awakening. This is a time to expect great things from God, and also to attempt great things for God.'

Praise: for all Christians to become an 'expectant community' preparing for revival and a fresh awakening. (Phm.1:20)

More: http://www.theway.co.uk/news/shownews.php?news_id=7185

■ Christian man freed after eight years in Libyan prison

A Christian man from Ghana has been released from a Libyan prison eight years after being imprisoned for distributing Christian literature. Daniel Baidoo was sentenced to 25 years in prison after collecting a parcel with biblical tracts in Arabic from a post office. In Libya converting Muslims to another religion is illegal, although according to the US the rule is rarely enforced. Mr Baidoo's early release was secured by the Vice-President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama, who was on an official visit to Libya. According to the Ghana News Agency, Baidoo said that he had ordered the documents from a Christian group in America. Libya has been ruled for 40 years by Colonel Gaddafi, who led a coup against the monarchy in 1969. Political and religious freedom in Libya is extremely limited. Colonel Gaddafi is the current head of the African Union.

Praise: Thank you Father for your justice and mercy for this man and we ask that more captives be freed and more of your wisdom given to all with a heart for mission. (Ex.15:1-2)

More: <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/christian.man.freed.after.eight.years.in.libyan.prison/23260.htm>

PRAYER FORUM OF BRITISH ISLES & IRELAND

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